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SEPTEMBER, 1973



conservationist







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# conservationist

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## Iowa Conservationist

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# autumn gold

By Roger Sparks





There's magic in gold leaves fluttering against the clear, autumn blue. The dry, cool breeze signals ducks to fly, leaves to fall, and football stadiums to fill on Saturday afternoons. In Iowa's natural lakes country, in-the-know anglers go "prospecting for gold" as yellow perch tie on the fall feedbag.

Around Spirit Lake, West Okoboji and most other natural lakes in the northern part of the state,

perch rank high on the angler's (and gourmet's) list of desirable fish. The most consistent perch fishing comes during the fall, after many rods have been stored. Fishing improves following the first frost and as the water cools it remains good, well after ice up.

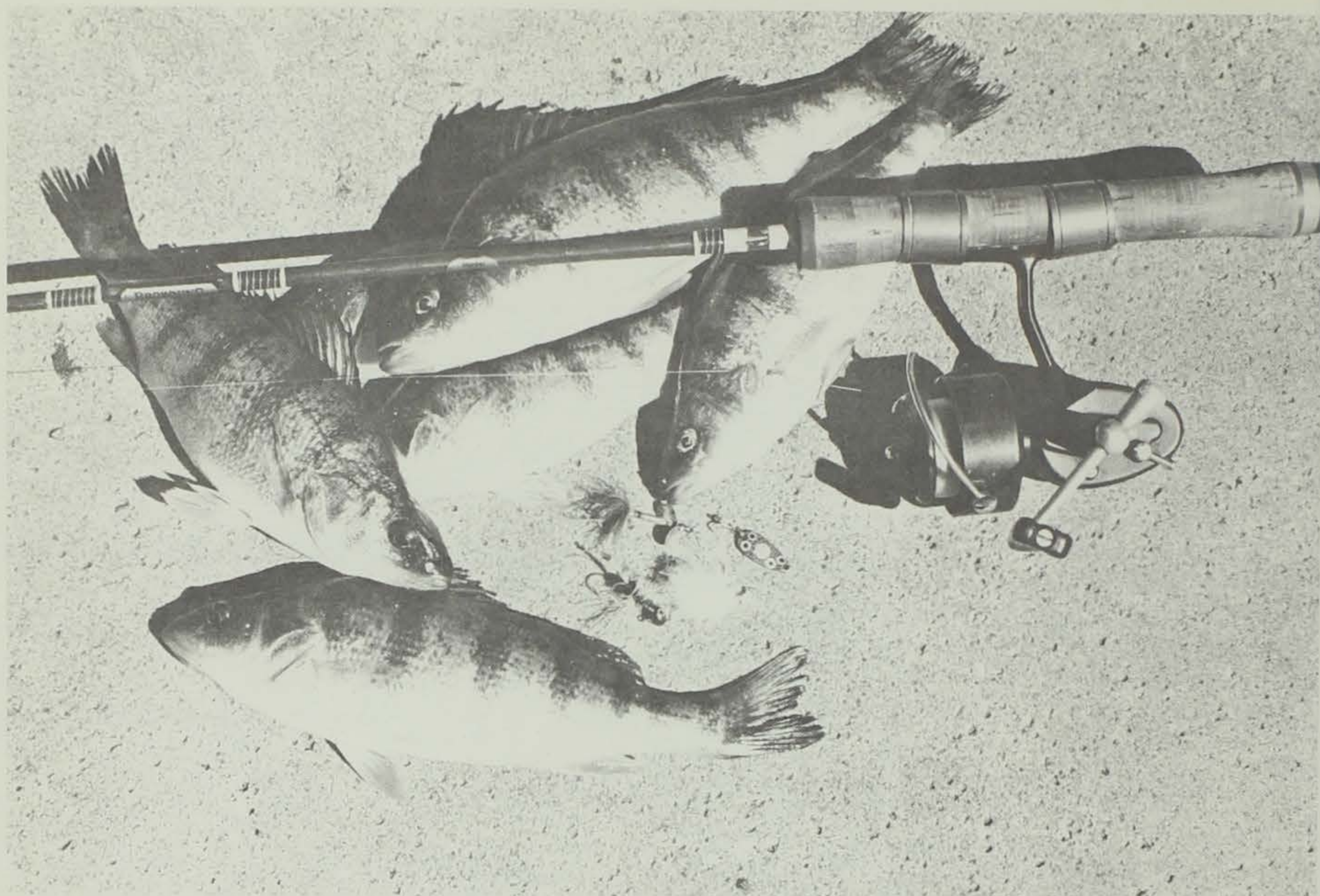
The best bet for big perch, foot long fish weighing up to a pound, is Spirit Lake. Most fish in Clear, East, and West Okoboji lakes run under 10 inches, but often provide

faster action. Use that boat during the day and fish deep water off rock piles or around deep weedbeds. In late September and October, evening perch fishing can be fantastic. Fish move to the shoreline and anglers casting from docks, around stream outlets, and off rocky points, clean up.

Best tackle is a lightweight or ultralight rod with a reel holding line light enough to handle tiny







A fall morning on West Okoboji

Photo by Jerry Leonard

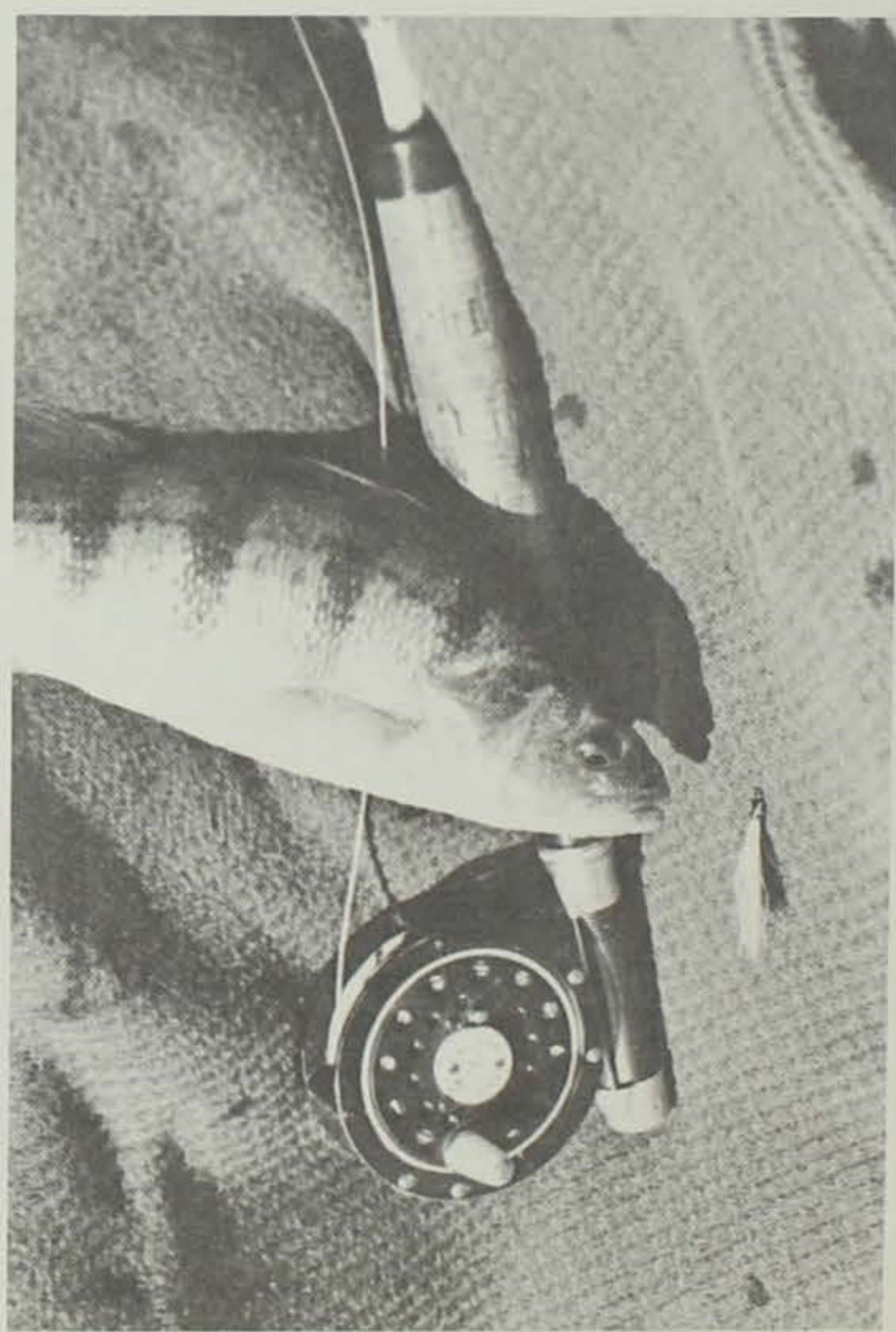


Photo by Ken Formanek





Ready for the pan

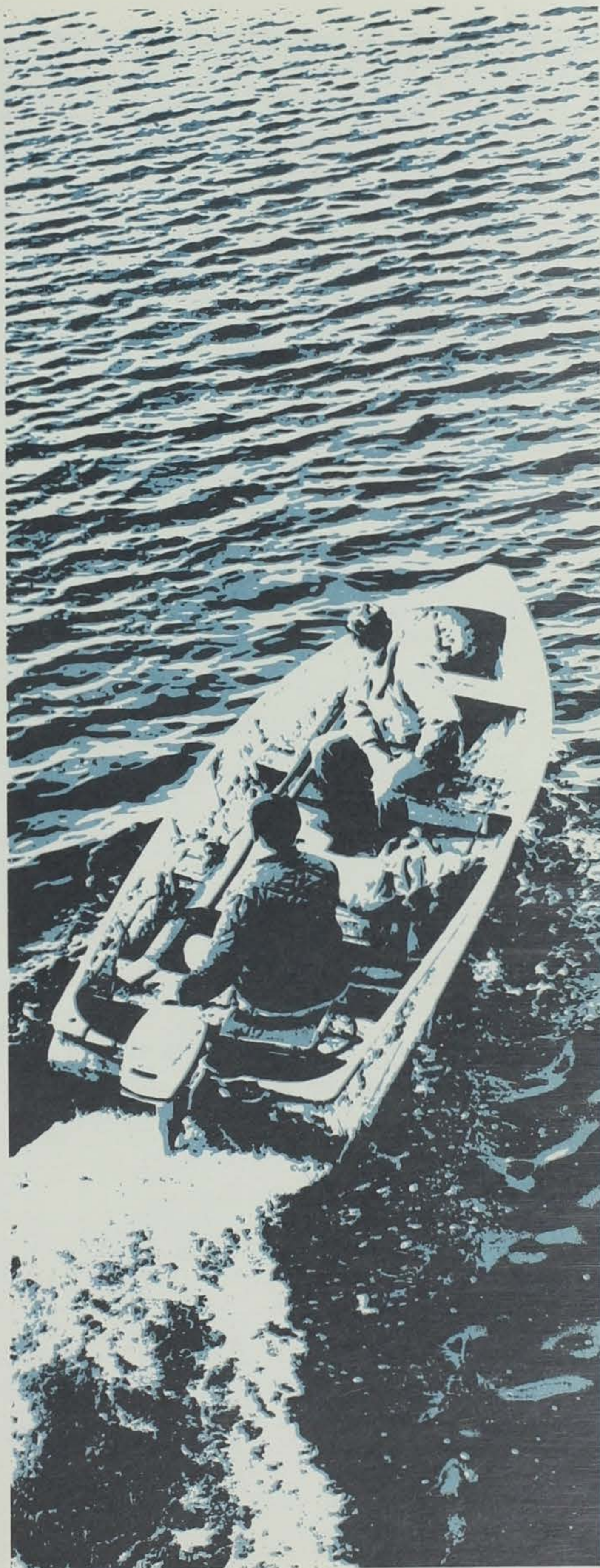
lures. Some argue that ultralight gear may cause the loss of a larger fish — a walleye or northern pike which may occasionally take the smaller baits — but the perch purist goes light.

Small leadheads, one sixteenth ounce and smaller are good along with spinners, spoons and miniature diving plugs. Worms and small minnows are top baits. If the fishing is slow during mid-day, try a combination. Attach a minnow or a small piece of night-crawler to a leadhead with the hackle removed. Fish it slowly — it'll pay off. Drifting a tiny ice fishing lure baited with a piece of worm will take fall perch, or just trolling a spinner/minnow or spinner/worm combination will score.

Flyrodders working the rocky points or wading the shoreline shallows often take a 25 fish limit on a fall evening. Perch are school fish and the action usually comes in bunches, particularly in the evening hours. Try any colorful streamer or large wet fly.

Although they're small, perch are plentiful, fat, and they fillet out well. Fried to a golden brown the choice pieces taste similar to, and maybe a bit sweeter than those of their famous cousin, the walleye.

If that thought can't compete with a football game, nothing can. ☆



Fall perch calls for warm clothing

Photo by Jerry Leonard







# keeping tabs on bobwhite

By Charles C. Schwartz  
Wildlife Biologist

One of the many problems associated with wildlife research and management involves keeping an account of the number of animals with which we are dealing. Knowing the answer to the question "how many" is one of the prerequisites to any research or management program.

The bobwhite quail, one of Iowa's important game species, is one of the many game animals on which the Iowa Conservation Commission annually keeps tabs. How do we keep track of bobwhite populations in Iowa? Basically, there are three major surveys conducted annually to estimate changes in quail numbers. These are: (1) a late-spring whistling cock survey, (2) an August production survey and (3) a bird-dog census on a study area.

The late-spring survey, referred to as a July whistling-cock survey, is used to estimate the potential spring breeding population. It is also used to determine distribution of quail populations in Iowa. The technique relies on one of the basic behavioral char-

acteristics of the bobwhite; the male's whistle to attract a mate. Throughout southern Iowa, there are designated survey routes where wildlife biologists and conservation officers count the total number of different calling male quail they hear. This number is then used as an index to estimate the spring breeding bird density and changes in spring quail numbers. This is reflected by annual changes in the yearly index. Reliable indices to quail abundance can be obtained without knowing, in absolute terms, the exact number of quail in Iowa, and can be obtained with less effort than is required for a complete census.

The second survey is a production estimation conducted in August. This survey, like the July whistling-cock survey, relies on one of the many behavioral characteristics of game birds. During late summer, early morning heavy dews are common. Quail, like pheasants and rabbits, do not like to stay in wet cover so they move to open areas to dry off. One place where they are commonly seen is along roadside rights-of-way. Realizing this fact, the Conservation Commission conducts an annual roadside survey of small game in mid-August. As with the July whistle count standard routes are located throughout Iowa's quail range. Starting at sunrise, trained personnel drive these routes and record all game sighted, including the bobwhite. Information from this survey is then used to determine the reproductive success for that year and to predict the coming fall population.

If we look at the August survey information that has been collected for the last ten years and compare this to fall hunting success certain trends become obvious. When the number of quail sighted on the August roadside survey increases, there is a good chance that the fall harvest will also increase, and visa-versa. If we apply certain statistical tests, which are used by biologists to help explain the relationship between two factors, we see that 90 percent of the change in our quail

harvest is explained by the change in our August survey. The same statistics used to determine how closely related our summer survey is to our fall harvest can also tell us how often we can expect to be correct in our predictions. It turns out that the probability of our harvest predictions being correct is also about 90 percent. In other words, we can successfully predict the quail harvest (which is related to your success) nine out of ten times. Why not ten out of ten? There are several factors which our survey is unable to predict. As you know, good quail hunting is related not only to good covey numbers, but also to weather, how well the corn and soybean harvest is along and many other factors. During oddball years like 1972-73 we are unable to predict the extent of crop harvest and weather. Even though bird numbers may have been adequate for a good quail season, old man weather did not cooperate.

Our third survey, the bird dog survey, consists of systematically searching 4,700 acres of private land in southern Iowa each fall and spring. This survey is usually conducted just prior to quail season and just after severe winter weather ends. During this quail count, biologists aided by pointing dogs systematically cover the study area and count all the quail they find. This information is used to monitor long and short termed changes in population on a discrete unit of land. Such data can be used to study the effects of winter weather on quail mortality and abundance. In addition, long term effects on quail numbers, from changing land use practices, like increased grazing or land clearing, can be documented.

As you can see, the Conservation Commission is expending manpower and effort each year to keep track of our quail populations. Hopefully, information gathered from these surveys will give us insight and a basic understanding of population changes for one of Iowa's finest game birds. ☆









# why iowa has good hunting

*By Rex Emerson*  
Low Enforcement Supervisor

Hunting is one of the greatest sports in Iowa. It is indeed a thrill to see a good bird dog pointing a covey of quail, or to hear the squawk of a big rooster pheasant as he becomes airborne. Perhaps you enjoy seeing waterfowl being decoyed in to your spread on the marsh, or it may be the white tail of a deer disappearing into the woods, or a little beagle dog chasing a cottontail rabbit that makes your spine tingle.

Whatever your favorite game animal might be, did you ever wonder how we can have such good hunting in Iowa since the state has become more populated, and with a substantial increase in the number of hunters.

Everyone knows it takes food, water, and cover for wildlife. Without these factors wildlife could not survive. However, there is one more very important factor, and that is protection; protection during the closed season when the wildlife are raising their young; protection for endangered species; enforcement of limits so there is enough game to go around for all those who like to hunt, but with enough left over for next year's breeding stock.

Your Conservation Officer is doing that job for you by enforcing the state's fish and game laws. This very energetic and dedicated man receives his salary from the

sale of licenses rather than from tax funds. He may be in charge of one or two counties, or in some cases three counties, so give him your cooperation and assistance. He is working for you. The hours are many, and the pay is not too bad unless you figure it by the hour, but due to his genuine interest in promoting conservation he enjoys every minute of his day.

Let's take a look at just one typical fall day in this officer's life. It starts early in the morning when he might be walking a small creek looking for illegal traps and checking animal tracks to get an idea of wildlife populations in the area. Sounds like a bit of a biologist.

A gun shot over the next hill arouses his curiosity and needs to be checked out. It might be an illegal hunter. So through the woods and over the hill. He's a sprinter, too, you know.

There are licenses to be checked during the day, and will include visiting with the hunters. Maybe he can help them to be more successful with their sport. Or perhaps a farmer is having some problems with hunters that didn't ask permission to hunt. He's a diplomat, too, you know.

Some of the hunters will be violating the law, and if they are apprehended, some time will be

spent in court making out informations and presenting his case. Almost a lawyer, too, you know.

A call comes in on his radio that a license depositor has some questions and would like for the officer to stop by. While in town he better get a radio program taped for next Saturday. He's a good public relations man, you know.

After supper is a hunter safety class for a group of Boy Scouts. These classes require a minimum of four hours instruction. Oh, yes, he's a teacher, too!

It's been a long day and so home to bed. Then the telephone rings. A car has hit and killed a deer, and the dead animal must be disposed of. So back to work.

Each day is different, but usually quite as busy. However, it is not at all unusual for someone to say to him, "Well, the hunting season opens tomorrow. I suppose you will have to go to work now." If the officer hadn't been working days and also some nights there wouldn't be any hunting season to open.

Yes, game cover is very important, but as long as we have people, the important thing to wildlife abundance is protection. The Conservation Officer is not just a game warden; he is "Mr. Conservation."



A black and white photograph showing a massive flock of birds, likely terns, in flight. The birds are scattered across the entire frame, from the top to the bottom, creating a dense pattern of dark silhouettes against a light background. The bottom of the image shows a dark, textured ground, possibly a beach or a field. The year '1973' is printed in a large, outlined font on the right side of the image.

1973



# WATERFOWL FALL FLIGHT FORECAST

*Richard A. Bishop*  
Waterfowl Research Biologist

The 1973 fall flight of ducks from the Canadian Prairies down the Mississippi Flyway is estimated to be about 30 percent lower than in 1972. This is the culmination of a series of events which has led to a bleak fall flight forecast. The scene was set in the spring of 1972 when good waterfowl habitat conditions failed to produce ducklings and resulted in a below normal hatch. The absence of young ducks in the 1972 fall migration allowed hunter harvest to cut into the 1973 breeding population. This occurred even with a 11 percent decline in the 1972 Mississippi Flyway duck harvest.

A mild dry winter in Canada, both Dakotas, Montana and north-west Minnesota, coupled with less than substantial spring rains, caused a 42 percent decline in pothole numbers from 1972 (down 41 percent from the 1955-72 average). Breeding surveys indicated many non-breeding birds and all signs hinted towards poor production. These surveys showed a decrease of 15 percent in the mal-

lard breeding population from 1972 and an overall decrease of 15 percent for all ducks.

Late season rains which occurred in June and July created slightly better than average water conditions, however, most of this rain fell north of the better breeding habitat. Much of Manitoba and both Dakota's still remain dry. The rains came too late to significantly affect early production but should stimulate some late nesting attempts and ensure survival of the broods produced. Brood survival is very important and can make or break the annual production forecast.

Regulations proposed for the 1973 hunting season are curtailed somewhat from 1972. The cutback is mainly in the length of the season and a slight reduction in the daily mallard bag for states accepting the point system. The Iowa Conservation Commission chose to hunt under the point system option with the following guidelines: 45 day season under a 100 point system, shooting hours from sunrise to sunset, a split sea-

son which will open October 6 and run through October 10, reopening October 20 and continuing through November 28, the Mississippi River proper will be closed to the shooting of canvasbacks and redheads. Point allocations are as follows:

## **100 Points**

Redhead, Canvasback (except on the Mississippi River the season on canvasback and redheads will be closed).

## **90 Points**

Female Mallard, Wood Duck, Hooded Merganser.

## **25 Points**

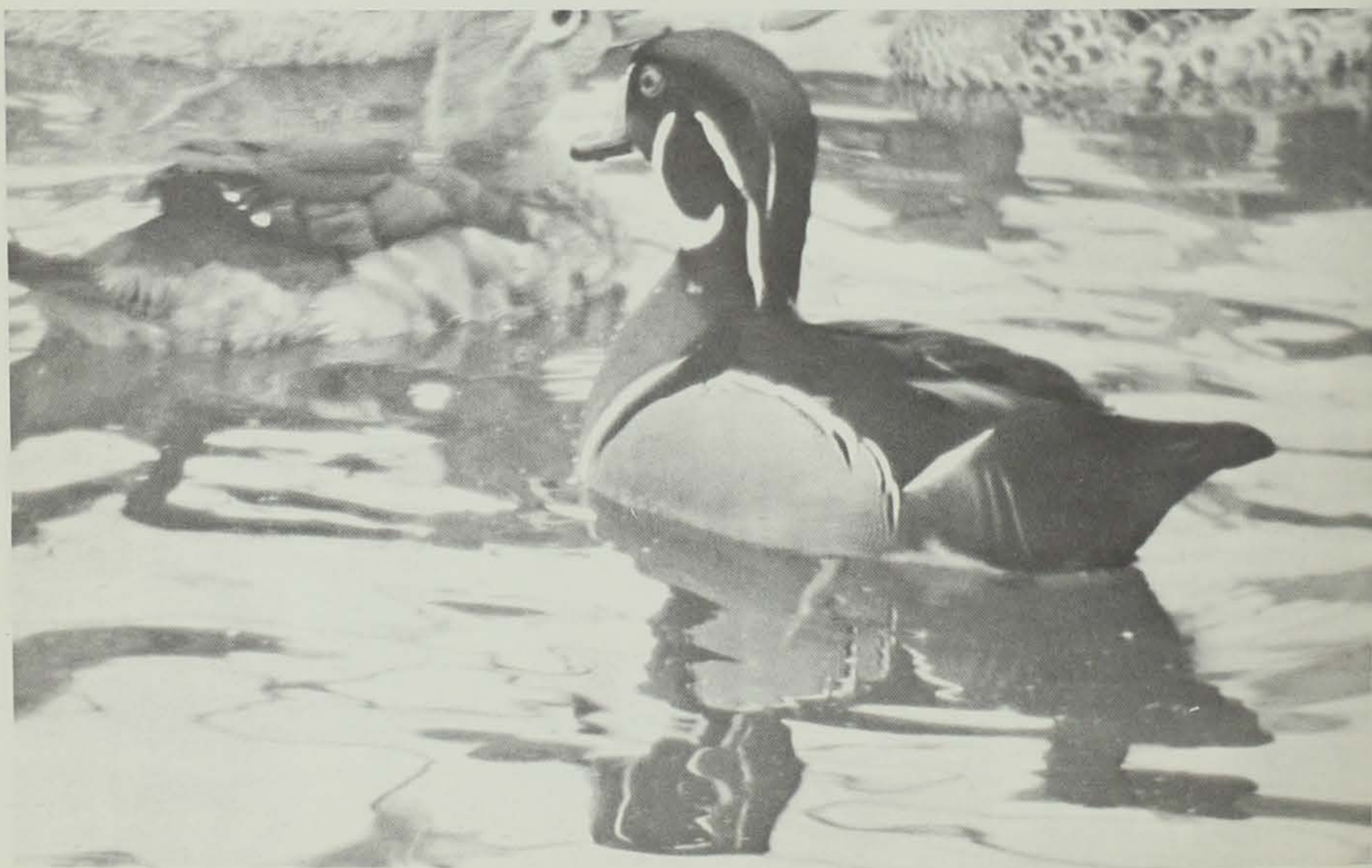
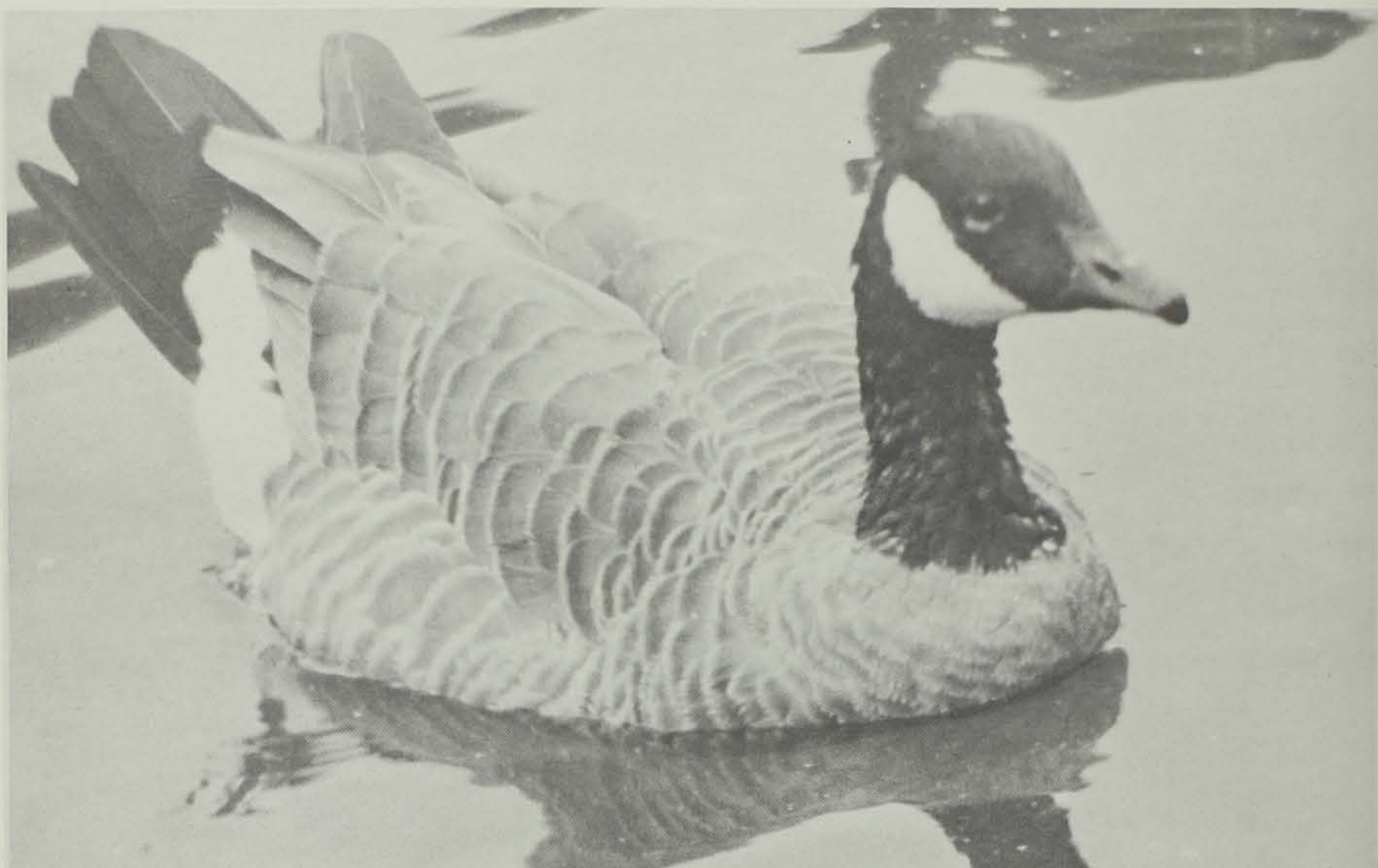
Drake Mallards, Pintails, Black Ducks and all others not specified.

## **15 Points**

Blue-winged Teal, Green-winged Teal, Scaup, Widgeon, Shoveller, Gadwall, Sea Ducks, Mergansers (except hooded).

This presents the hunter with the potential daily bag limit of from 1 to 7 ducks depending on the species and the order taken.







Providing a redhead or canvas-back was not shot first, hunters would have a minimum bag of two ducks regardless of species.

These regulations do not appear to be curtailed as severely as waterfowl populations indicate. Data strongly suggest that as long as hunters abide by the regulations there are built-in restrictions in the point system and ample recreational opportunity can be offered without substantial increases in the harvest. Evaluation of past-hunting season data indicates that the magnitude of harvest projected from the 1973 regulations will result in a reduction in the 1974 mallard breeding population in the vicinity of one million birds. However, we feel this is acceptable due to the lack of prospective breeding habitat in 1974 and the fact that almost any season allowed would have resulted in a reduction in the 1974 breeding population. When water returns to the prairies, moderate seasons will allow the re-population of this habitat. One additional fact is the increased number of ducks breeding outside what we call the "major duck factory," in areas such as Iowa, Wisconsin, Michigan, Ontario and the far north. (While working on geese in northern Manitoba this spring I observed almost twice the number of mallard pairs compared to last year.) I believe production from the forested region and northward to above the tree line will be more significant than in past years.

The success of Iowa hunters is not always dependent on overall fall flight forecast. We can experience good hunting even in years of poor production if migration conditions are just right. The prospects for hunting in Iowa will depend on weather and migration conditions. One bright aspect is the big increase in local ducks. May surveys showed approximately a 30 percent increase in breeding teal and mallards in Iowa and recent observations in northern Iowa leaves the impression of a good hatch of ducks.

Many mallard broods were seen in flooded agricultural fields suggesting above normal reproduction on private lands. This should increase the chances for a successful early hunting season.

The goose picture is quite a different story. To briefly sum up this situation, we experienced an early spring break up in the Arctic. This encompassed the majority of the breeding range of both blue and snow geese and Canada geese. Mild weather during the nesting and early brood rearing period created ideal conditions for good success. Fair weather coupled with a larger number of breeding females should produce one of the best fall flights of geese in recent years.

When large numbers of young are present, the midwest states usually have high harvest rates. This is the result of the vulnerability of young inexperienced geese and the fact that they cannot withstand long flights without replenishing their energy reserves. This causes the birds to pause and feed frequently which creates ideal hunting conditions for this season. Goose hunting should be much improved over 1972.

The goose season will open October 1 and run through November 9 for Canada geese only. Blue and snow goose hunting will be allowed from October 1 thru December 9. The daily bag limit will be five geese of which no more than one can be a Canada goose and two white-fronted geese. The possession limit of five geese may not include more than two Canada geese and two white-fronted geese. Shooting hours are from sunrise to sunset.

Please note that our attempts to re-establish the giant Canada goose in northern Iowa have been highly successful. This year with good local goose production we estimate the hatch of Iowa Canada geese to be between 700-1,000 birds. We will continue to build this flock for the benefit of the resource and the Iowa public. ☆





# Warden's diary

By Rex Emerson  
Law Enforcement Supervisor

The first of a series of excerpts taken from an officer's notebook.

■ This is starting the third day that I have been sitting on this river bank near a fish trap. It rained a little bit last night. A sheet of plastic sure came in handy to keep dry. Can't build a fire; the smoke would be seen by the violator. Canned heat was made for this job. Beans and soup can be heated without tell-tale smoke. Nothing worse than cold beans for two or three days. Had a few little catnaps during the night using a boat cushion for a pillow. Didn't know whiskers could itch so much! 7:45 a.m. A car is coming across the field. Looks like a little action is about to start. A gooseberry bush is sure thorny to take cover under, but the river can be seen from here.

## Shooting sports are SAFE

Bet you thought hunting is a hazardous sport. Actually, it ranks 16th on the list of hazardous sports, according to a major insurance company.

In order of risk, they are:

1. Football
2. Winter Sports
3. Baseball
4. Swimming
5. Basketball
6. Skating
7. Accidents in the country or at the beach
8. Bicycling
9. Accidents at parks, picnics and outings
10. Golf
11. Horseback Riding
12. Boating and Canoeing
13. Gymnastics
14. Fishing
15. Accidents at churches, theaters and concerts
16. Hunting

7:50 a.m. The car stopped real close by. A man in overalls, blue shirt, and a tan cap got out. He walked the remaining thirty feet to the river bank and looked around for what seemed an eternity. Satisfied that all was clear he got in his boat and went straight out to the fish trap.

8:05 a.m. He dropped a big iron hook attached to a rope over the side and hooked the tail rope of the trap. The trap was soon in the boat, the lid taken off and fish being dumped on the floor of the old John boat. A noisy blue jay had just discovered me. The noise of that old bird was put to my advantage, as it covered the click of my camera. I was too close to use it before. As the trap slid back into the water I quickly changed locations to a big oak tree located between the car and the violator. On his way to the car with his sack of fish he was surprised to find himself within three feet of a game warden. It was too late to run, but I'm sure he wished he could just sink into the ground.

A citation was issued for his court appearance the next day. The sack of eight catfish will be held by me as evidence. There were some real nice fish in the sack and they got a little heavy as I carried them down the river about a quarter mile to where my boat was hid. The fish trap was pulled out, and it, too, will be held as evidence. The fish will be rough-dressed and frozen. They will have to be held until after the court hearing and the date of appeal, which will be another 20 days. After that the county home will get them.

It's time to go home and get these whiskers off, and have a hot meal; in that order.

■ Worked on squirrel hunting patrol today. The early season squirrel hunters have problems with all the leaves still on the trees. One squirrel hunter told me he didn't know whether to shoot at squirrels or mosquitoes. It seemed like there wasn't much difference in the size!

Most of the good hunters are out in the timber about daylight. It is difficult to check his license because he will sit down on the ground and lean back against a tree to quietly wait for a squirrel to show himself. He thinks it real funny if the warden walks past without seeing him. If the hunting is good, the shots will soon pinpoint the hunter's location.

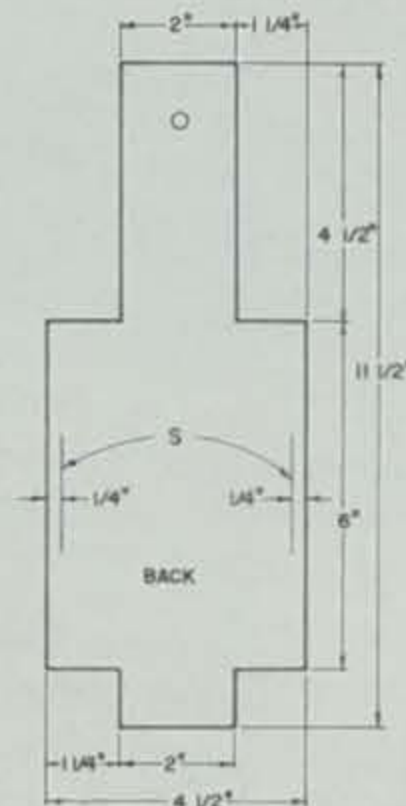
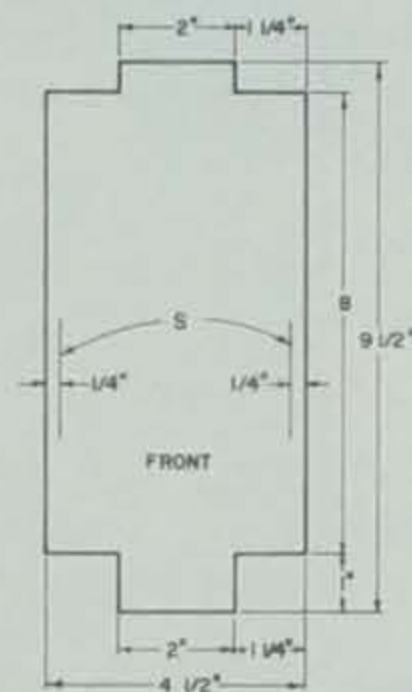
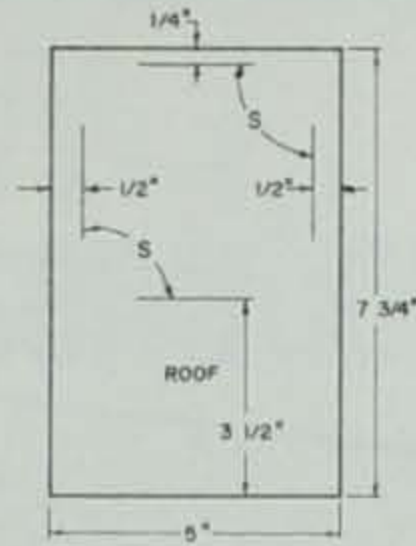
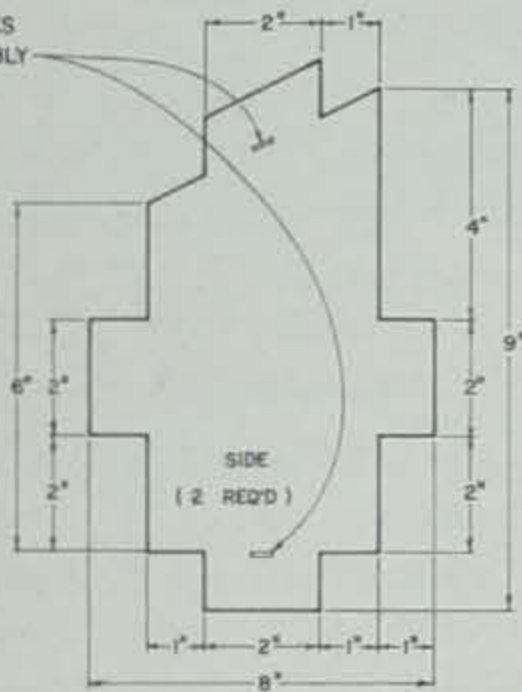
One hunter had a dog that would tree squirrels and then bark at them. He was easy to find, and he was a little embarrassed when asked for his hunting license, because he had forgot to get one. "I'll buy one just as soon as I get back to town," he said. I told him, "Fine, I hope you do, because that is where the Fish and Game Division gets the money to furnish the protection for wildlife, but you must have a license before you go hunting and be able to produce it upon request of an officer or land-owner. I have no choice but to issue a citation ordering you to appear in court next Monday at 9:00 a.m."

The rest of the day was spent about the same. There were two more hunters without a license, and one with an assembled gun in his car. All will have their day in court.

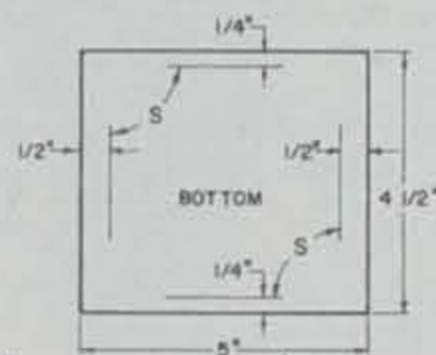
Went home at 5:00 p.m. and cleaned up. Had a 6:00 p.m. supper meeting with the Lion's Club, and gave a short talk about the hunting seasons and limits. ☆



PLACE SUPPORT STICKS  
HERE AFTER ASSEMBLY



NOTE:  
ALL SLOTS (S) ARE 2" LONG.



# Classroom Corner

By Curt Powell

Administrator  
Conservation Education

The hunting season is upon us and the seasons are changing. This is the time of the year to renew our acquaintance with the natural beauty of fall. Iowa outdoors offers a fascinating opportunity to appreciate the unfolding dramas of the hunt, changing seasons, migrations, and winter preparation by many of Iowa's resident animals and birds.

For those who hunt it is the time to become familiar with hunting seasons, bag and possession limits, species identification and, most certainly safety while hunting. Did you know that the Iowa Conservation Commission has an excellent hunter safety education program? In case your hunting involves the use of boats, did you know that the Conservation Commission has a boating safety coordinator and is in the process of developing a water safety education program?

Keeping busy during the winter months is good for all creatures, including man. There should be things that we can do during the winter months that could be used later on in the spring or summer. The Hennepin County Park Reserve District at Minneapolis, Minnesota, offered this project for classroom work. **Classroom Corner** has modified the design somewhat for ease of assembling. Have you ever built a bird house from cardboard? It can be done.

Cut your heavy cardboard according to the dimensions shown on the plan. Waterproof the pieces with shellac, varnish, or paint. Assemble the birdhouse and place a stick across the top and bottom of the house to give it support. The hole in the front should be 1" for wrens or 1 1/2" for bluebirds.



## 1973 - 1974 HUNTING - TRAPPING SEASONS AND LIMITS

Season	Dates	Shooting Hours	Daily Bag Limit	Possession Limit
RABBIT (Cottontail & jack)	Sept. 1 - Feb. 28	6 a.m. - 6 p.m.	10	None
SQUIRREL (fox and gray)	Sept. 1 - Dec. 31	None	6	12
*DEER (bow)	Oct. 13 - Nov. 25	1/2 hr. before sunrise	1	1
Split Season	Dec. 8 - 16	1/2 hr. after sunset	1	1
*DEER (shotgun)	Dec. 1 - 5	Sunrise to sunset	1	2
All zones	Oct. 1 - Nov. 9	Sunrise to sunset	Check regulations	
CANADA GEESE	Oct. 1 - Dec. 9	Sunrise to sunset	Point system	30
GEESE (other species)	Oct. 6 - 10	Sunrise to sunset	15	25
DUCKS	Oct. 20 - Nov. 28	Sunrise to sunset	25	16
COOT	Sept. 1 - Nov. 4	Sunrise to sunset	8	10
RAILS (Sora & Virginia)	Sept. 1 - Nov. 4	Sunrise to sunset	5	
SNIFE (Wilson's-Jack)	Sept. 22 - Nov. 25	8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.	None	None
WOODCOCK			None	None
**RACCOON	Oct. 13 - Feb. 15	None	8	16
Zone 1-N of U.S. 20	Oct. 27 - Feb. 15	8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.	2	4
Zone 2-remainder state	Oct. 27 - Jan. 31	8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.	3	12
QUAIL	Oct. 20 - Nov. 25	8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.	4	8
GROUSE (ruffed)	Nov. 10 - Jan. 6	8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.	None	None
PHEASANT	Nov. 10 - Jan. 6	None	None	None
PARTRIDGE (Hungarian)	June 15 - Nov. 30	None	None	None
**WOODCHUCK			None	None
*FOX (hunting)	Sept. 1 - Feb. 15	None		
(red and gray)	Continuous open season	None		
COYOTE				

\*Hunters possessing both shotgun and bow deer licenses may take only one deer.  
 \*\*These seasons open at 6 a.m. on opening day and will close at midnight on closing day

### 1973 TRAPPING SEASONS

MINK-MUSKRAT	6 a.m. November 10 to midnight December 31, 1973
FOX (Red and Gray)	6 a.m. October 27 to midnight January 31, 1974
BEAVER	6 a.m. November 10 to midnight April 15, 1974
RACCOON, STRIPED SKUNK, SPOTTED SKUNK (Civet Cat),	6 a.m. Oct. 27 to midnight Feb. 15, 1974
OPOSSUM, BADGER and WEASEL	Continuous open season
OTTER	No open season

NOTE: Water sets are permitted only from 6 a.m. Nov. 10th to midnight Dec. 31.  
 (Does not apply to beaver)